

MEMORANDUM

Updated 10/18/21

The State Library's responses to the questions and issues raised by members of the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped Advisory Committee at their August 13, 2021 meeting with Senator Osten and Secretary McCaw are below (beginning on page 4).

Immediately below, the State Library also submits additional background information to inform both the overall circumstances and the particular questions raised by Advisory Committee members and OPM.

Overview of Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

Connecticut's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) was established in 1968 to lend materials for free to any Connecticut adult or child who is unable to read regular print due to a visual or physical disability. Like its 80+ Network Library counterparts across the US and the world, Connecticut's program operates in conjunction with the Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS). In this cooperative partnership, NLS funds/provides all reading materials¹ to patrons, including any equipment, hardware, and software necessary for both patrons and staff; through a mix of Federal and State dollars, the State Library funds/provides personnel and facilities. Delivery is by US mail and digital download – the service model at all NLS libraries. Because the program is via mail order/download, the LBPH facility located in Rocky Hill, CT has operated since its inception as a service warehouse. The physical items in the collection are provided using Duplication on Demand technology: the books are stored on computer equipment at LBPH and transferred by staff to reusable cartridges for shipment to patrons; patrons then use playback machines to read the book. Once a cartridge is returned, it is wiped and used for the next delivery. Local patrons have occasionally come to the facility to drop off or pick up already-processed cartridges, but there is no standing collection to browse.²

¹ Connecticut has supplemented the NLS materials with audiobooks recorded and produced by the LBPH-affiliated non-profit Connecticut Volunteer Services for the Blind and Handicapped (CVSBH), which are distributed electronically. CVSBH is funded entirely through grants and donations.

² The State Library transferred its collection of large print materials to the LBPH facility in 2015 when the Willimantic Library Service Center was defunded and closed. These materials are part of the Division of Library Development's collection and supplement public libraries' own large print collections across the State. Purchase of these materials (approximately \$7,500-10,000 per year) is paid for with Federal funds received annually from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. This collection was recently reviewed and weeded (a standard library process which means duplicates or items that have not circulated in a significant period of time are removed from the collection to make room for newer materials) and can now be transferred to available space at the Division's remaining Service Center in Middletown. Public librarians regularly visit Middletown to select items for their patrons and so occasionally have visited the LBPH facility to access the large print materials.

State Funding for LBPH

Connecticut does not directly fund LBPH's operations, instead indirectly providing support through personnel, the facility, and minor supplies. As funding for personnel throughout the State Library decreased, so did staffing at LBPH, and we long ago passed the tipping point of Federal dollars providing the majority of staff funding. Currently, the State funds three LBPH positions: the Unit Head (currently vacant; interviews for a replacement have concluded and an offer can be made immediately), a Library Aide, and a Clerk Typist (expected to retire as of October 1); all three positions are counted in our Federal Maintenance of Effort (MOE) calculation. Federal funds are used to pay for four additional staff members; three Federally-funded positions have been left vacant as staff departed and State/Federal support decreased.

Moving LBPH

Technological development has transformed NLS and LBPH operations in recent years: storage capacity on the cartridges used to house/ship accessible books has increased literally ten-fold, and digital downloads became first possible then prevalent. As a result, LBPH was able to provide faster service and more books to Connecticut readers while at the same time rapidly requiring less physical space. Meanwhile, other State Library units – chiefly Public Records and Archives – continue to expand. Unlike essentially any other unit in Connecticut, these departments continually require more space, not less, and are already contending with insufficient space to meet the demands of their statutory mandates to preserve the State's operational history. There have been numerous requests to fund the development or acquisition of more space for the State Library over the years; none have succeeded.

An idea was born of necessity: move LBPH operations to a smaller space and free up the facility for those that now needed it. The idea was in a very nascent stage when the call for budget reductions was issued to State agencies in Fall 2020 and, through an unfortunate miscommunication, the Interim State Librarian submitted it as an official proposal to OPM when it was intended to remain only an internal idea for further analysis. The long-time LBPH Unit Head retired, and the new State Librarian began her appointment. The idea became an official part of the proposed budget, then part of the final budget. The State Library had to respond rapidly to the new reality. It quickly became clear that the original idea (relocate to the State Library's primary facility at 231 Capitol Ave.) would not meet the unique needs of LBPH's operations. For example, the State Library shares its space with the Supreme Court and facilities are administered by the Judicial Branch. The State Library side of 231 Capitol Ave. lacks ADA compliant entrances/bathrooms/other spaces, dedicated meeting rooms, on-site public parking, the necessary loading area and service elevator to accommodate high volume mail deliveries and the large Duplication on Demand equipment, and other considerations. When we consulted with NLS (which provides the location guidelines for Network Libraries), 231 was dismissed immediately and Middletown, which offers all of these resources ready-made, was not only approved but seen as a location which could offer patrons better service and possibilities. One State-funded staff member (whose primary responsibility is direct communication with patrons), has also stated her intention to retire rather than go to the 231 location. With money, deficiencies at our various locations (including the State Library's other space concerns) can be resolved, of

course. But without those funds, and with an immediate directive to further save money at the Rocky Hill facility, we selected the best option available to us.

Opportunities for Service Expansion

The Unit Head's retirement also provided an opportunity to assess LBPH operations and consider new possibilities. 1) NLS recently revised its guidelines so that people with reading disabilities are also eligible to receive materials, significantly expanding the potential patron base. It also recognized that, with the advances in reader technology, staff time that had been spent on physically processing materials for shipment could be spent on developing programming and targeted community engagement. 2) In most States, libraries of this type are part of the Division of Library Development (DLD) or its equivalent. Through its work with public, academic, special, and other libraries across the State, DLD reaches library patrons of all ages, across socio-economic, racial, and other lines, throughout Connecticut. Personnel in DLD are trained experts in developing and offering library programming, assisting librarians and patrons of all ages with reading selections, and community engagement. The Middletown Library Service Center is equipped with an accessible meeting space, a browsing collection, and a computer lab with adaptive technology; it is the location at which all interactive State Library training and programming is offered. 3) The Federal funding we receive from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is allocated entirely to DLD to meet the tailored goals of IMLS. The services provided by LBPH help meet those goals, which is why the State Library has been able to fund staff with Federal dollars. In fact, in order to sustain existing operations, 25% of our annual Federal allocation now goes to support LBPH and its 5,500+ patrons. In comparison, 25% of funds are also allocated to our Statewide delivery service, which serves every Connecticut resident with a library card (more than 1.5 million people).

By folding LBPH operations under the DLD umbrella, we will be able to pair experts in serving patrons with disabilities with experts in library outreach and engagement. The LBPH staff in particular has been rejuvenated by the chance to work closely with colleagues they hardly knew and learn about ways DLD is already offering programs and services LBPH patrons could benefit from. "I never knew the State Library did that" and "I feel reborn" are just a few of the comments staff members have made in recent months. This staff, which has developed deep relationships with our LBPH patrons over the years, is eager to continue this transformation and move LBPH services into the future.

Conclusion

The State Library is committed not only to continuing existing LBPH services but also to expanding services through outreach to current and potential patrons, inclusion in DLD operations, and the same future-minded approach we take in other State Library operations. While moving LBPH services became an immediate concern due to the budget process, the decisions we made were not driven by cost-cutting alone.

The State Librarian and DLD Director are meeting with Paul Hinsch and Mike Izadi on August 31, 2021 to visit and review all three State Library facilities under consideration and in light of necessary and desired services. Interviews for the new Unit Head have concluded; we have an

excellent slate of candidates, each of whom fully demonstrated an understanding and need for service assessment and community engagement; having that new hire's experience and voice as soon as possible will surely assist all of us in this ongoing conversation. Current LBPH staff are energized and excited about the changes already happening and still to come; maintaining momentum will help us maintain morale.

We recognize that the proposed move to Middletown has created some concern with members of the Advisory Committee and OPM, and we are certain that together we can achieve a solution which balances operational needs and patron interests.

Below is an annotation and compilation of OPM notes from the advisory meeting on 08/13/21.

The State Library's responses are indicated in italics.

Issues of concern/problems highlighted by Advisory Board

- 1. Paratransit/Transportation Access Issues** – Currently, patrons can utilize one paratransit bus from Hartford to Rocky Hill and have direct transport to the library.
 - a. The proposed Middletown location is 2+ bus trips from Hartford for some patrons, it can be potentially precarious for patrons due potential delays, busy intersections, and roads that surround the Middletown location.
 - b. The proposed relocation does not take into consideration the difficulties arising from such complicated transportation routes. Such complications can be jarring and represent a barrier accessing the library for a member of the Deaf Blind or Blind community at large.

The State Library is committed to working with OPM and the Advisory Committee to pursue a model that both achieves the operational benefits of the planned relocation and division merger and also ensures the community's need for a convenient and safe location are met, both in Hartford and across the State. Possible solutions include:

- *Conferring with CTDOT about paratransit options that are responsive to current and potential future needs.*
- *Relocating "back end" existing LBPH operations (mail order services; processing; and phone/email consultations with patrons) to Middletown while exploring alternative locations for community engagement, such as:*
 - o *Hosting Advisory Committee meetings at 231 Capitol Ave. or another central location;*
 - o *Using the new outreach van to provide on-site programming throughout the State;*
 - o *Deepening partnerships with local public libraries; and more.*

2. Timeliness/location of materials – Requesting physical books written in Braille can be a multi-day or week process. This is due to the request having to be processed by the librarian and then forwarded to a centralized repository in Utah. Outstanding questions include:

- a. How long does it take from request to receipt of online/e-books?

Requested items are available for download immediately.

- b. How long does it take from request to receipt of physical materials?

The standard delivery timeframe is 5-7 days. Patrons are aware of this and work with staff to order enough materials to last up to a month, ensuring they have constant access and cover any delivery time for new materials.

- c. lack of timeliness for students when requesting materials when related to school. When students are requesting books, it can become a multi-week process, hindering the ability to complete or start assignments.

Two schools signed up for LBPH services in 2019 (Killingly Intermediate and New Canaan Public) but have never requested or downloaded materials from either LBPH or the Utah service. No other schools or patrons have requested educational materials from LBPH staff. NLS does offer a textbook service, AccessText, but the lack of any actual requests for such services from Connecticut residents meant LBPH has not pursued it; the service remains available should we receive any requests in the future.

- d. Is there a possibility for the state purchasing commonly used educational material?

The State is moving towards Open Education Resources, offered by the CT Commission on Educational Technology, and free for students (including LBPH patrons) and teachers alike. AccessText is also an option.

- e. Is the library in Utah the only option for book requests in the nation?

In 2014, the LBPH Unit Head conducted an extensive study (available upon request) of available services for hard-copy Braille materials. At the time, 39% of LBPH's storage capacity was being used to house Braille materials, but actual usage equaled only 0.7%. This was deemed "a grossly inefficient use of resources" and LBPH was unable to process new materials received from NLS for other patrons because there was no available space. Three services were analyzed: in Utah, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. Massachusetts and New Jersey were closer, but their costs were both significantly more expensive and unpredictable (based on items circulated, not number of patrons – Utah charges by number of patrons). In the case of Massachusetts, patrons would also no longer work with "their" Connecticut staff to select reading materials (one of the most-loved and appreciated aspects of LBPH operations), instead communicating only with staff in Massachusetts. The Utah system was – and remains – the gold standard, with the infrastructure and collection to meet usage demands; 20

States, from Alaska to Georgia, use this program to provide hard-copy Braille materials. A new Braille eReader, the size of a Kindle, is also on the horizon. When the study was conducted in 2014, of LBPH's 5,500+ patrons, 33 Connecticut residents were using hard-copy Braille materials; in 2021, that number has fallen to 18 (less than 0.32% of our total patrons), with 6-8 regular monthly users. In an average month, these 18 users request about 42 print Braille books in total from the Utah service; LBPH provides nearly twice the number of Braille books via digital download each month. In comparison, LBPH patrons receive nearly 18,000 items of all types by digital download or Duplication on Demand cartridge. In other words, Braille items – both print and digital – account for less than 0.76% of our monthly service.

- f. Do other states utilize a different repository that might be closer or have shorter processing times?

While Massachusetts and New Jersey are closer, they lack the capacity and collection of the Utah system. They are also more expensive, with the base cost to use the systems significantly exceeding actual patron usage.

- g. Purchase of Physical Books/materials – The Library is planning the purchase of a sprinter van; would this provide access to locals across the state?

The new van (to be purchased with one-time COVID-related gift and Federal funds [allocated directly to State Libraries from IMLS], then maintained with annual Federal funds from IMLS) is intended to be an outreach vehicle: allowing the State Library's museum, outreach, archives, DLD, and other teams to take programming and training to schools, libraries, cultural institutions, and other locations across the State. Programming targeted at LBPH patrons can absolutely be part of our efforts, and the internal committee planning these efforts is already aware of the need and interest to develop this type of programming.

Both the LBPH and Middletown locations are part of our existing Statewide delivery service. Like all Connecticut residents, LBPH patrons can request materials, including specialized items such as large print books and audiobooks, from the State Library or other libraries across the State and have them delivered to their local library for pick up. This service runs five days a week.

3. What is the feasibility of the state owning materials - having them spread in multiple locales or having a central location with the van providing supplemental support (ie: 2 visits per region)?

See 2g above

- a. Technological Abilities – There are some patrons that have issues with adapting to technological advances, the e-books do not serve this population.

The majority of our patrons have voluntarily switched to the electronic system, but we do understand that comfort with technology and preference for physical items means some will continue to request print materials. Our patron feedback

(verbal feedback to staff in regular contact with these patrons) shows they are well-served and satisfied. The difference in cost between continuing with the Utah service versus the Massachusetts or New Jersey programs gives us a sufficient margin to absorb an increase in those requests, such as existing patrons switching back to physical items or new patrons wishing to participate.

- b. This issue, and the considerations for those that are both Blind and Deaf is a driving force for the need to investigate the costs and logistics associated for physical materials such as Braille books.

If there are outstanding questions about cost and logistics not answered above, we'd be happy to provide additional information.

4. Clarifications on the States collection of materials– Do the requests being made have any internal repository that is checked first?

- a. Does the library have any materials in their own collection?

All items are owned by NLS and distributed through the State Library. After the switch to the Utah program in 2014, and the need to create space for other materials being sent by NLS, many of our Braille materials were distributed to other Network Libraries for their use. NLS recalled all remaining materials in 2019 when it implemented its Duplication on Demand service for Braille materials. All network libraries have moved to this system.

- b. Was there any money that was donated to the library with the intention to purchase Braille books and build their collection?

Most bequests and gifts do not specify how the money should be spent, and provide general support for LBPH operations. To date, we have not received any bequests or gifts directed toward Braille materials.

- c. Do we currently meet regional needs and requests?

Yes, we are meeting current needs and requests.

5. Proportional attendance and usage of materials and facilities – currently, the library records have a limited number of people that come into the physical location.

- a. Is the current model working effectively to serve the community at hand?

The current model, as determined by NLS and its long-time practice, is focused on providing resources to patrons electronically or by mail order. While patrons have occasionally visited the facility to pick up or drop off cartridges, the facility does not offer a browsing collection, computer workstations with assistive technology, or a welcoming space for conversation and programming. Both NLS and State Library staff recognize Network Libraries are at a turning point: how can the program be expanded to offer some or all of these services to LBPH patrons? Folding LBPH operations into DLD and transitioning to a new location were and are intended to provide opportunities for this expansion of services while recognizing the funding constraints of both NLS and the State Library. The Middletown location's browsing collection, accessible meeting space, and

computer lab equipped with adaptive technology, as well as the synergies and opportunities presented by having both LBPH and current DLD staff under the same roof, seemed an ideal opportunity to begin offering these expanded services.

- i. Is this due to the location of the library itself?

This is somewhat of a chicken-and-egg matter: the NLS service was not designed for patrons to physically visit, and so the location/facility is not equipped to do so.

- ii. Is the number of attendees coming into the branch proportionally equivalent to able bodied patrons attending local libraries (10% community engagement locally)?

The number is not proportional, again because of the current structure of the NLS service model.

- b. Is there a proportional usage regardless due to online requests?

Yes, our statistics and patron feedback show high usage and satisfaction with the mail order/online request model.

- c. Loss of 300,000 in federal funds/ 50k in state funds – the amounts were cited as lost/removed from the library, this was stated as due to state and federal funding decisions.

The LBPH personnel funded by the State are included in our Maintenance of Effort calculation for Federal funds. The Unit Head retired in December 2020 and returned as a TWR employee for the first four months of 2021; TWR employees cannot be counted toward the MOE. The DLD Director is currently serving as the interim unit head (whose time is already a 100% MOE match), and we are in the process of hiring a new Unit Head (interviews for a replacement have concluded and an offer can be made immediately; we hope to have the position filled as soon as possible and no later than year-end). The gap between when the former Unit Head retired and when the new Unit Head can be onboarded is resulting in lost funds; the longer the position is vacant, the greater the loss – potentially up to \$300,000: although vacancies/new hires are normal fluctuations in MOE calculations, it will still take time to rebuild our State support, as the former Unit Head's salary and benefits were at the top of the band and any new hire is expected to start well below those numbers.

- d. **Use of library as a public-facing meeting location** –Currently library is used for Advisory Board Meetings. The desire was expressed that the library serve as a meeting space for group events as well as a public-facing space for book readings and check-out of materials.

The warehouse-style facility in Rocky Hill has been used by the Advisory Committee for meetings in the past. The Committee is welcome to meet at the Middletown location (which has a welcoming, designated meeting space), convene at 231 Capitol Avenue (our Reading Room and Memorial Hall are occasionally used for meetings, although they are also large, open spaces being

used by museum visitors and researchers at the same time), or a convenient alternate location (such as the local public library). Similar options could be made available to LBPH patrons.

- 6. Ongoing site was not being utilized in tandem in consultation with the advisory board** – The director did not communicate with the board about modifications and changes which resulted in lackluster transition/communication efforts with the community.

The State Librarian fully acknowledges she did not reach out to the Advisory Committee upon her arrival. In the transition to her new position and the departure of the former Unit Head, the existence and role of the Committee was not communicated. When the Committee contacted her, she immediately apologized for the unintentional oversight and met with the group within days (as soon as all parties were available) to discuss the changes.

- a. Ongoing role of Advisory Board-** “Given the breakdown of communications between Library services and the Advisory board and questions about the model for services, the role and purpose of the board needs to be clarified.”

At the State Library, we genuinely value the input of and our connection to the community. Ensuring we have a healthy, ongoing relationship with the Advisory Committee is paramount. Central to rebuilding that relationship is open communication. The Advisory Committee’s (nb: per Bylaws, “Committee” rather than “Board”) existence and role are determined by NLS, not the State Library. It meets four times a year, and its primary function is to act as a sounding board for LBPH staff and connection to the community. Unlike, for example, the State Library Board (the State Library’s governing authority), it has no statutory or functional oversight of LBPH’s staff or operations. In the words of our counterparts at NLS, “the keyword is ‘advisory’”. According to the Committee’s Bylaws, three members of the State Library staff serve in an ex officio capacity: the State Librarian, the LBPH Unit Head, and the Director of the Division of Library Development (the new counterpart for the Director of the Information Services Division listed in the Bylaws). In the past, the former Unit Head attended all meetings, and the State Librarian attended when scheduling and matters under discussion warranted it. When she joined the State Library staff, the DLD Director was not informed of her role on the Committee, nor was she ever included in invitations to or communications about meetings. With all designated State Library personnel now informed, we commit to attending these Committee meetings regularly moving forward and request timely notification of meetings from the Committee. The State Library also commits to ensuring meeting requirements as set out in the Bylaws (such as quorum, minutes, and timely notice of regular and special meetings) are adhered to at future meetings.

- 7. Building issues** - Issues with the facility in Rocky hill were cited as one of the reasons presented to the community for the move. National library is pulling back its physical resources to be redistributed to other states with requests.

- a. What exactly are those issues and how does that impact the permanence of the facility residing there and is the building in an optimal spot for access?

NLS provides guidelines for accessible and useable Network Library facilities such as LBPH. For example, the most recent guidelines include: ADA compliant entrances/bathrooms/other spaces, a staffed/furnished reception area, dedicated meeting/programming spaces, separate and secure staff offices and work areas, a loading dock to accommodate high volume mail delivery and the large Duplication on Demand equipment, and other considerations. The LBPH facility at Rocky Hill offers hardly any of these; 231 Capitol Ave. is even more deficient. The Middletown location, however, offers all of these resources ready-made. In addition, the LBPH facility was built in the 1960s and is showing its age. In recent years, for example, the roof has been replaced (but still leaks in heavy rain), the HVAC died and staff was working with space heaters until it could be replaced, mold remediation was necessary, and the driveway and parking lot are riddled with potholes.

APPENDIX

Overview of Scenarios

The State Library operates the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) in partnership with the Library of Congress's National Library Service (NLS). Like its 80+ counterparts, this NLS network library provides reading materials to Connecticut residents for free through a mail order and download service model. Both the State Library and LBPH's Advisory Committee are interested in expanding services to include new users and increase community engagement. Three location scenarios assessing LBPH's existing operational needs and potential program expansion opportunities are below.

Location Scenario 1: Middletown

Operational Considerations: The Middletown Library Service Center (MLSC) is an existing State Library facility, home to the Division of Library Development (DLD). It is an ideal future home for LBPH operations, already meeting the majority of NLS's guidelines for a network library, including ADA compliant entrances/bathrooms/other spaces, dedicated meeting room, computer lab with assistive technology, on-site public parking, a reception area, browsing collection, and the necessary loading area to accommodate high volume mail deliveries and the large Duplication on Demand equipment. Space is available for an immediate relocation of staff and equipment. NLS fully supports moving to this location.

Program Expansion: By integrating LBPH and DLD operations, LBPH patrons will benefit from DLD's existing expertise and partnerships with other state and national groups working with this community (including the CT State Education Resource Center Library, Veterans National Forum, National Digital Inclusion Alliance, CT Department of Public Health, and CT Commission on Education Technology) and ongoing support and training for public libraries across the state (recent curriculum for CT librarians has included: developing programs for special needs patrons; storytime for children on the Autism spectrum; social and emotional learning; and ADA library construction). In addition to free public parking, paratransit services currently run to MLSC, dropping visitors directly outside the door for meetings and programs. Currently, LBPH patrons may visit any public library across the state (including access to in-person and virtual programming). The State Library is also in the process of acquiring a new outreach van, allowing staff to take in-person programming to any CT location, and ensuring the State Library can truly be a community resource for all residents, including LBPH patrons.

Location Scenario 2: Hartford

Operational Considerations: The State Library has two Hartford locations, 231 Capitol Ave. and 75 Van Block Ave.; neither is fully under the operational control of the State Library. After an on-site assessment, OPM's facilities team concurred with the State Library and NLS that the 231 location is not a feasible new location for LBPH operations. The building is jointly shared by the State Library and the Supreme Court, with the Judicial Branch overseeing all facilities matters. Built in 1910, the building meets hardly any of NLS's guidelines, chiefly the lack of ADA

accessible entrances or restrooms on the State Library side, on-site public parking, dedicated meeting spaces, workspace to accommodate staff and equipment, or a loading dock for freight deliveries. All existing public and staff space is in use by the State Library's other statutory units, including the law library, Museum of Connecticut History, Public Records, and comprehensive collections of state historical materials. 75 Van Block is a leased facility, primarily used by State Archives and the borrowIT CT delivery service for public libraries. The facility does meet a few NLS guidelines, having a loading dock, an ADA accessible entrance/restroom, and a meeting room. All workspace is currently being used by other statutory units; reconfiguration would come at the expense of these other units and the CT residents they serve, and any changes would need to be approved by the landlord and DAS Leasing. In addition, visitors must go through security at both facilities; at 231, everyone must go through a metal detector and Judicial Marshal screening, and at Van Block, security must both buzz people into the parking lot and screen them upon entrance.

Program Expansion: Although there is no current space available for existing LBPH operations in Hartford, the meeting room at Van Block could be scheduled for Advisory Committee meetings or other LBPH-related programs and events, similar to how State Archives-affiliated boards and groups use it currently.

Location Scenario 3: Rocky Hill

Operational Considerations: Due to the user-driven shift to download and Duplication on Demand, LBPH operations now occupy (and require) a minimal footprint at the current facility. Staying in Rocky Hill would keep staff separated from their DLD colleagues and impair efforts to build partnerships between the two previously separate operational units. While capital investment is required for continued use of the building, keeping LBPH operations in Rocky Hill would mean space is being dedicated to a unit that operationally no longer requires it and at the expense of others which have great need for it. The State Library would have to continue seeking additional facilities and capital investment to meet the statutory requirements placed on its Public Records and State Archives units.

Program Expansion: The Rocky Hill location has a small conference room, equipped to seat no more than 10 people maximum (without social distancing). It has a conference phone but no other computer or virtual meeting equipment. Larger meetings would be set up in the open space of the warehouse facility and amidst staff space and operations. At this location, meetings would be best served by partnering with local public libraries, the new outreach van, the Van Block meeting space, or other options. Increased public utilization of the facility would also require capital improvements on the building to mitigate various concerns, including structural damage to the parking lot and the building itself.

State Library Recommendation

The State Library and NLS remain fully in support of Scenario 1: relocating LBPH operations to Middletown. This move would capitalize on existing strengths, allowing staff to begin immediate outreach to new patrons and expansion of programming for current patrons, and could be achieved with minimal cost or delay. If transportation options in addition to paratransit is desired, conversations with DOT can be renewed to address that interest. In addition, virtual

meeting technology, DLD partnerships with public libraries throughout the state, the meeting room at Van Block, and the new outreach van can all be utilized for future Advisory Committee meetings and patron programming.

Future Expansion

The scenarios above address current LBPH operations and ways to expand programming and serve new LBPH patrons. If there is legislative and OPM interest in further expanding services in other ways, the State Library welcomes the chance to continue the conversation.